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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 107: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/55/3, A/55/38, A/55/271, A/55/293, A/55/308, A/55/322, A/55/385, A/55/399, A/55/138-S/2000/693, A/55/162-S/2000/715, A/C.3/55/3 and A/C.3/55/4)

Agenda item 108: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century (*continued*) (A/55/341, A/55/74, A/55/162-S/2000/715 and A/C.3/55.4)

1. **Mr. Al-Hinai** (Oman) said that since launching its development process in 1970, Oman had been transformed from a primarily rural society into a prosperous modern State. By1995, quality-of-life indicators had revealed a striking improvement in the situation of girls and women. However, the review process preceding the Fourth World Conference on Women had highlighted the need to focus more attention on girls and women as increasingly active partners in the public domain. Accordingly, priority had been given to such issues as personal status and social, economic and political participation.

2. The Government of Oman had significant achievements to its credit in many fields. Universal access to maternal and child health services had led to declining mortality rates and an increased life expectancy. Educational access for girls had been greatly facilitated: the school enrolment rate for girls had been 48.5 per cent in 1997-1998, while significant numbers of girls were going on to university. Literacy programmes for women had been expanded and strengthened, especially in rural areas, and as a result adult literacy rates were rising.

3. Enhanced participation by women in all fields of national development was being actively encouraged by the highest levels of Government. Moreover, new civil services rules that promoted training opportunities for women had been put into effect.

4. Initiatives to increase women's participation in the labour force had yielded substantial results: 19 per cent of all civil servants had been women in 1994, whereas by 1998 that figure had increased to 26 per cent, and, furthermore, women were being promoted to senior positions. In addition, the Government had initiated training programmes and poverty reduction schemes centred around increasing women's economic self-reliance through income-generating projects and increased access to soft loans.

5. In the field of decision-making, both the State Council and the Consultative Council had included women from their inception, and the right to vote for the Consultative Council had already been granted to Omani women.

6. Concerted efforts had been directed at ensuring wider participation by women in local-level decision-making. While non-governmental organizations were still something of a novelty in Oman, efforts to expand the scope of their activities and strengthen their management capacity had led to an increase in the number of women's associations from 17 in 1995 to 25 in 1999.

7. The country's Constitution and laws contained provisions aimed at promoting the involvement of women in the public and personal spheres. The provisions in question had been drafted with special attention to the empowerment of women through their rights derived from the Shari'a (Islamic law), with the result that considerable headway had been made in advancing principles enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

8. The Government of Oman was confronted with new socio-economic challenges as changing lifestyle patterns brought about the rapid acceleration of urbanization and consumerism. It was, none the less, committed to continuing its implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, and to working in cooperation with the relevant bodies of the United Nations system to realize a promising future for Omani women, and all the women of the world.

9. **Ms. Otiti** (Uganda) said that her delegation commended the organizations of the United Nations system for stepping up their efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as clearly they had done. The Government of Uganda had done likewise by putting in place the African Plan of Action to accelerate the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action.

10. In the course of the implementation process, participants had had an opportunity of exchanging ideas and drawing lessons from their respective experiences in various fields. To tackle poverty, for example, it was important to continue to empower women economically. Most women in developing countries lived in rural areas and were food producers. Accordingly, rural development schemes targeted at women should be set up to enable them to control their produce and the income they obtained by selling it. Uganda's National Action Plan on Women had put in place strategies expressly designed to address the gender gap and empower women economically.

11. Similarly, the education and training of women and girls was becoming increasingly important with time. Young girls should no longer be left at home on the pretext that it was preferable to educate boys.

12. With respect to the field of health, there could be no ignoring HIV/AIDS. It was women who were most seriously affected by the pandemic, as when they were ill they had not only to care for themselves, but also to care for their children, their husbands, and in many cases the community.

13. Violence against women was manifested in many forms, including harmful traditional practices and the misuse of power by men. Her delegation had been pleased to learn from the Report of the Secretary-General on Trafficking in Women and Girls that the subject was now the focus of attention at the United Nations and at regional and national levels.

14. Her delegation also took the view that women should be involved in resolving conflicts, but that goal could be achieved only if they were involved in decision-making at all levels.

15. Ultimately, the way the girl child was treated by society was the most important factor in achieving the advancement of women. As long as girl children were discriminated against, women could not advance. Only when the girl child was treated equally with the boy child would there be genuine progress toward other goals.

16. **Ms. Elliott** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the 14 States Members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that were members of the United Nations, said that those States wished to align themselves with the statement that had been made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda items 107 and 108.

17. She briefly reviewed the history of international action for the advancement of women since the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. International statistics offered some insight into the work that still remained to be done before women would be fully empowered economically, socially and personally. In the year 2000, women accounted for almost two thirds of the world's illiterates; they constituted the majority of those living in poverty, with little or no access to education and health services; each year, more than half a million women died from pregnancy-related causes, while 23 million developed life-threatening complications that could have been avoided. There was a widening gap between the peoples of the developed countries and those of the developing countries. Women from developing countries accounted for over 99 per cent of the world's maternal mortality and morbidity, and for over 93 per cent of the world's illiteracy. They were a significant portion of the 12.5 million people suffering from major diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, anaemia and diabetes. Malnutrition, ignorance, unemployment, early marriage, early motherhood and repeated childbearing further increased their vulnerability.

18. The CARICOM Member States had adopted a holistic approach to the promotion of gender equality, women's participation in the economy and decision-making, and protection for women under the law. Moreover, they had incorporated a gender perspective into their economic and social policies, and were paying particular attention to the critical areas of women and poverty, education, health and violence against women.

19. The serious nature of the problem of poverty and its prevalence among women were highlighted both in the Regional Plan of Action that had been adopted by CARICOM after the Fourth World Conference on Women and in the Caribbean Sub-regional Review and Appraisal Report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

20. To address the challenge, the CARICOM Member States had adopted a variety of measures, including poverty alleviation programmes, more pre-school and day care centres, legal reforms, the establishment of vocational training centres, an expanded range of

maternity benefits, and strengthened public assistance mechanisms.

21. In 1999, following the World Trade Organization's ruling on the banana regime for countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States benefiting from the Lomé Convention, Saint Lucia had initiated a Social Recovery Programme to reduce the poverty impact of the ruling. Trinidad and Tobago, for its part, had established a Small Business Development Company, most of whose trainees — 90 per cent of them, in fact — were women, while 80 per cent of the participants in the Community Venture Programme were also women, primarily rural women. In Guyana, the Women's Leadership Institute was aimed at helping women participate more effectively in activities that affected their daily lives.

22. The CARICOM Ministers with responsibility for women's affairs had adopted a regional policy document on gender equality and social justice which called for the elimination of structures tending to deprive women of a balanced share of the region's resources. With respect to education, while it was true that enrolment levels of girls exceeded those of boys, it was questionable whether the educational system provided girls with the relevant skills required for the job market.

23. Over 360 000 persons in the Caribbean region, more than a third of them women, were affected by HIV/AIDS. Given that sexual activity began at an early age in the region, and that more than half of all reported cases of AIDS were due to unprotected sexual intercourse between men and women, growing attention was being paid to improving public awareness on the use of condoms and reducing the risks of contracting HIV.

24. To address the issue of violence against women, the CARICOM Member States had adopted a multisectoral approach involving the health, education and law enforcement sectors. Legislation on domestic violence had been adopted, shelters for affected women had been established, and police officers and health workers were being given appropriate training.

25. Women had risen to positions of authority and responsibility in Government, the private sector, and political and religious organizations. As a result, women were able to influence policies that affected their daily lives.

26. The critical financial situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was most regrettable. The Caribbean countries called upon the international community to support the Institute, which was important for their region. Lastly, in an era of economic globalization, when international capital markets and international organizations were dominated by a small group of countries, the Caribbean States deemed it necessary to point out that any serious attempt to combat poverty and improve women's standards of living must be based on genuine international cooperation aimed at creating a trade, financial and economic environment that was propitious to the developing countries.

27. **Ms. Wensley** (Australia) said that the outcome document and the Political Declaration that had emerged from the review and appraisal of progress since the Fourth World Conference on Women together constituted a clear blueprint for action. The next challenge for Governments and other actors in the international community was to put that blueprint into effect. There was, however, an equally important challenge, namely, to keep the advancement of women on international, regional and national agendas after the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had passed into history, despite the many competing priorities for the time, energy and resources of all concerned.

28. The Australian Government, for its part, would continue to do everything in its power to keep the issue high on the international agenda. In that connection, the special session of the General Assembly on Financing for Development, to be held in 2001, would afford an excellent occasion for focusing attention on the link between gender equality and development.

29. Similarly, the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which was to be held in South Africa in September 2001, would afford an ideal occasion for drawing the world's attention to the particular impact of racial discrimination on women and girls.

30. Major international conferences were not the only opportunities to mainstream a gender perspective into the international agenda. For example, the recommendations of the Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (Brahimi report) would provide opportunities for Member States to consider

the role of women in peacekeeping and peace-building operations. The United Nations itself should do its part by integrating women's issues into all its mechanisms. Individual Member States and the Secretariat should continue their efforts to identify suitably qualified women for positions throughout the United Nations system, including positions as Special Representatives and Deputy Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. The Group of 12 Women Ambassadors to the Organization would shortly raise the issue with the Secretary-General himself.

31. The Australian Government was strongly committed to improving the operation of international human-rights mechanisms, including those which protected and promoted the rights of women. It had recently conducted a review of its interaction with the United Nations Treaty Committee system, and had announced a package of measures which aimed to bring about an improvement in the operation of that system, in the belief that reforming the system would bring tangible benefits to many women around the world. One important aspect of reform was to ensure that the committees in question had the financial and human resources they needed to perform their role effectively.

32. The Government also believed that regional organizations should pursue the advancement and empowerment of women. It had played an active role in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Advisory Group on Gender Integration. The bilateral development assistance programmes established by Australia in the Asia and Pacific region, for their part, had long supported the promotion of equal opportunities and equal rights for women.

33. The Australian Government was currently looking at ways of using its future aid contributions to East Timor to assist the promotion of women's rights, and to help ensure that women took an active and equal role in the development and administration of a new society from the very outset. The Gender Affairs unit in the United Nations Transitional Administration was already playing an important role in the political and social reconciliation process.

34. At the national level, the Government was continuing to seek innovative initiatives to improve the opportunities of women in all walks of life. It had introduced a new social reform agenda to tackle social problems, especially those arising from gender discrimination and inequality. Focus on prevention was a key feature of its approach.

35. The special session of the General Assembly held in June 2000 had been rather like the Olympics of women's rights. The Sydney Olympic Games were over, but the athletes were not resting on their laurels; instead, they had already returned to their training programmes in the hope of doing even better. Like them, the international community should continue its efforts to achieve gender equality, development and peace for all women and girls.

36. **Ms. Steiner** (Israel) said that the June 2000 special session of the General Assembly on the question of women and the Millennium Declaration represented a milestone for women. The peace process and the arrival of large numbers of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia had required Israel to make great efforts in education and social activities geared toward ensuring equal rights and opportunities for all women and men. The great socio-economic changes brought on by the forces of globalization, privatization and the expansion of high-tech in Israel had had a profound impact on the status of women, one that could not yet be evaluated. Several Government Ministries were offering training programmes that enabled participants to improve their skills, especially their computer skills. In March 1998 the Authority for the Advancement of Women had been established to formulate gender equality policies, promote law enforcement and education, and coordinate the activities of public and private organizations responsible for the advancement of women in Israel. The Authority had sponsored literacy projects for Arab and Bedouin women and training courses for vulnerable sectors, such as Arab, Bedouin, immigrant and ultra-orthodox women. The Authority, aware as it was that women in those sectors were inadequately informed about the risks of breast cancer, had instituted an awareness-raising programme to encourage them to undergo early detection testing.

37. The above were only a few of initiatives currently under way in the areas of poverty and health. Over the previous five years, much had been accomplished toward the empowerment and protection of women in Israel. However, the task of measuring the results still remained: it had not yet been possible to determine whether there were fewer poor women, whether violence and sexual assault against women had been reduced, whether young people had learned to respect

gender equality and equal rights, especially as they applied to the political arena and decision-making positions. The next decade should be devoted to determining whether the implementation of United Nations resolutions to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women had actually stimulated sustainable development.

38. **Ms. Aragon** (Philippines) expressed satisfaction with the outcome document that had emerged from the General Assembly's review of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women: it reaffirmed the principles of the Beijing Platform for Action, identified the remaining challenges and proposed action to deal with them. Her delegation welcomed further action to emancipate women from poverty, improve their health and increase their participation in decision-making processes. It also welcomed the recognition of the fact that women could play an important role in peacemaking, and the fact that violence against women, including domestic violence, had come to be treated as violations of human rights. The number of signatories to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol was a reaffirmation of the international community's commitment to the advancement of women.

39. Her delegation was gratified to see growing attention directed toward the issue of trafficking in human beings. The meeting of the Asian Regional Initiative against Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children (ARIAT), held in Manila from 29 to 31 March 2000, had afforded Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations an opportunity of addressing the problem, which was one affecting millions of women and children throughout the world, particularly in Asia. The meeting had reviewed best practices and developed a regional action plan on policies and practices to fight the phenomenon of trafficking in persons in all its forms. The Philippines had urged countries in the region and other organizations to examine the action plan and to consider appropriate implementation in their respective jurisdictions, having due regard for each country's particular circumstances. Participants had been encouraged to cooperate with one another and with civil society at the national, subregional, regional and international levels in addressing the strategic areas set out in the action plan, namely prevention, protection, prosecution, repatriation and reintegration. The Secretary-General had been requested to circulate the report on the outcome of the ARIAT meeting as a United Nations document.

40. Her delegation was gratified to see elements of the ARIAT action plan reflected in the outcome document on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, and emphasized that the challenge of transforming words into deeds still lay ahead. In that connection, her delegation would be submitting a draft resolution recalling the international community's commitment to the fight against trafficking in persons, and hoped for the support of the other delegations.

41. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of data on trafficking and on good intervention practices. Such data were important in gauging how effectively the international community had responded to the scourge of trafficking in human beings.

42. **Mr. Mwakawago** (United Republic of Tanzania) noted the landmark decisions concerning gender matters which had been adopted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in June 2000 and at the Millennium Summit in September 2000. Those important decisions, which strengthened and complemented the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, also brought out new challenges that had emerged in the five years since the Fourth World Conference on Women. Governments had agreed to take the cause of women a notch higher by identifying the barriers that had impeded the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. For example, country reports from Africa indicated that women were still having difficulty gaining access to resources and services such as credit, education, health care and legal counsel. Globalization, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and armed conflict were also preventing many countries, particularly the least developed ones, from fulfilling the commitments they had made in Beijing.

43. There had been modest progress in addressing the issue of gender balance in the Secretariat (see A/55/399), and the Secretary-General was to be commended for his efforts in that connection. However, more work needed to be done, and Governments should facilitate the process of achieving gender balance at all levels by nominating women candidates, in particular for posts related to

peacekeeping, bearing in mind that recruitment should be based on equitable geographic representation. At the country level, Governments should promote gender balance by appointing women to decision-making positions in all public and private sectors, including the diplomatic service: of the 189 Member States,[9] only 11 had appointed a women to the post of permanent representative.

44. An important way of achieving the goals of gender balance and equality of opportunity was by putting emphasis on the education of girls. It was for that reason that the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania had taken measures to promote the enrolment of both girls and boys in school and to revise the curricula and textbooks to make them more gender sensitive. It was also working to change attitudes in society in favour of girls' education. The outcome document and the Millennium Declaration were to be commended for having placed the right focus on education. It was to be hoped that Member States would pursue the targets set forth in those documents with determination.

45. It was deplorable that INSTRAW should be facing imminent closure for lack of resources, in view of the excellent work that it was doing. The outcome of the special session and the Millennium Summit had shown that all concerned, including the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, had a role to play in the promotion of gender equality, development and peace. Accordingly, the delegation of the United Republic of Tanzania called upon the development partners to act with generosity by providing, inter alia, the resources needed to promote gender equality, and urged closer cooperation among all stakeholders.

46. **Ms. G/Mariam** (Ethiopia) said that the special session of the General Assembly held in June 2000 to review progress made during the five years since the Fourth World Conference on Women had provided Member States with an opportunity of reaffirming their commitments to the advancement of women, evaluating the evolving situation, noting obstacles that had been encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and identifying fresh initiatives for their full implementation. The feminization of poverty, globalization, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, gender-based violence, debt, trafficking in women and girls, conflicts, all were obstacles preventing women from occupying their rightful place at the national and international levels. It had been with the purpose of addressing those problems that the Member States had adopted a Political Declaration and an outcome document at the conclusion of the special session.

47. The Government of Ethiopia had given high priority to the issue of the advancement of women in all its aspects, and had taken effective measures to incorporate a gender perspective into poverty eradication programmes. Programmes relating to agriculture had resulted in substantial change for the better in the lives of rural women. Half the beneficiaries of credits disbursed to the urban and rural poor were women heads of households or girls who had dropped out of school. The Ethiopian Social Rehabilitation and Development Fund had also played a considerable role in poverty alleviation through the provision of social services and capacity building activities. Non-governmental organizations had contributed to the national effort as well, by helping women participate in income-generating activities and providing them with microfinancing.

48. With respect to health, in 1998 the Government had adopted a national HIV/AIDS policy aimed at women and children in particular. A National AIDS Council headed by the President of the country had been established to implement the policy. The World Bank had recently granted Ethiopia a soft loan of $60 million to help it pursue its efforts in that connection.

49. Ethiopian women, like women in many developing countries, had been victims of discriminatory practices and laws which the Government was working to amend or eliminate. The Parliament was currently considering amendments to the Civil Code of 1960 aimed at revising discriminatory provisions in the area of marriage and family relations, such as those governing marriageable age, the relationship between spouses, ownership of property, divorce and the like. The Government was also taking measures to address the issue of violence against women. A National Committee on Rape and Abduction had been formed, comprising the Women's Affairs Bureau of the Prime Minister's Office, Members of Parliament, representatives of the Ministry of Justice and other governmental agencies and representatives of non-governmental organizations. The Women's Affairs Department of the Ministry of Justice was endeavouring, with the assistance of non-governmental organizations and international

organizations, to inform the public about the constitutional rights of women, relevant laws and international treaties.

50. While there had been a significant improvement in women's enjoyment of their human rights and participation in political, economic and social life, some constraints remained, the most important of them being Ethiopia's lack of capacity.

51. **Mr. Al-Sadi** (Kuwait) said that his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization should support Governments' efforts and develop complementary strategies and programmes for full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly.

52. Kuwait had identified objectives and developed strategies aimed at enhancing the role played by women in society. In particular, it had (1) taken all necessary measures to revise laws and regulations that restricted women's participation in social, economic and cultural life, (2) eliminated all social, economic and legal obstacles to women's access to the labour market, (3) afforded women the opportunity of participating in social, economic and cultural life and opened up new sectors to them, and (4) encouraged Kuwaiti girls to participate in sport-related, social and cultural activities and programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

53. Under the country's Constitution, women enjoyed full economic, political and social rights, and were acknowledged as participants in social development. Accordingly, Kuwait had signed many international instruments aimed at protecting women and strengthening their rights, including the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Furthermore, it was currently drafting a series of laws designed to foster participation by women in public life on an equal footing with men. In 1999, women had accounted for 34.3 per cent of the labour force (compared to 31.4 per cent in 1995), and had held 11 per cent of all decision-making positions (compared to 4.1 per cent in 1993), including such positions as Under Secretary of State, university dean and ambassador. Indeed, the Emir of Kuwait had issued a decree, No. 9/99, granting Kuwait women full political rights, including the right to stand as candidates in municipal and parliamentary elections, but the decree had been voted down by the legislative authority.

54. Despite the Government's efforts to strengthen the role played by women in society and to remove the obstacles confronting them, a Kuwaiti woman inevitably encountered problems, in particular psychological problems, when she lost her parents, a brother, a sister or her husband. In that connection, it was well known that Kuwaitis and nationals of other States were still being held in Iraqi prisons. The suffering of the women concerned was compounded by the fact that Iraq had neither released the Kuwaitis whom it had been holding prisoner for 10 years, nor shown any sign of intending to inform their families about their fate. It should be recalled that the Government of Iraq had not been participating in meetings of the Tripartite Commission or its technical subcommittee since February 1999. Among the 605 Kuwaitis being held prisoner by Iraq were seven young women, and neither the Government of Kuwait nor the families of the prisoners in question had any knowledge of what had become of them. The question of those prisoners was strictly humanitarian in nature, and it was not in anyone's interest that it should be used for political ends or blackmail.

55. **Ms. Al-Nadari** (Yemen) said that the Secretary-General's report (A/55/341) emphasized the importance of strengthening international cooperation on behalf of the advancement of women, and of providing adequate funding for country programmes aimed at implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Yemen remained committed to the objectives set forth in the Platform for Action and in the Beijing Declaration, and was working to promote gender equality, eliminate all obstacles confronting women and facilitate their access to the labour market. The country's Constitution enshrined the principle of the equality of all citizens and gave women the right to education and the right to vote on the same footing as men. Yemeni women participated actively in political and economic decision-making processes, and a national committee had been established to address issues of concern to women.

56. Poverty was unquestionably the problem that had the most serious adverse impact on the efforts of the least developed countries, including Yemen, to fulfil their obligations with respect to the advancement of

women. The Government of Yemen had taken various measures to combat poverty, including the creation of a social safety net that provided women with substantial benefits. In the education sector, the Government had implemented a series of actions aimed at reducing illiteracy among women and narrowing the literacy gap between the sexes.

57. Her delegation wished to emphasize that adequate measures must be taken to protect women and children living under occupation, including, in particular, women and children living in Palestine and in the occupied Arab territories. Yemen aspired to a world free of violence and discrimination against women, a world of justice and equity toward women, in a word, a world of gender equality.

58. **Ms. Barghouti** (Observer for Palestine) stated that the convening in June 2000 of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", five years after the Fourth World Conference on Women, had shown that the international community regarded the advancement and empowerment of women as highly important. The outcome document, adopted after difficult negotiations, reviewed the main achievements to date and set out further action and initiatives required for fulfilment of the commitments that had been made in the 12 critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action. Considerable attention had been given to the issues of poverty, violence, discrimination and the situation of women in armed conflict, including women under foreign occupation. Such attention, however, must be transformed into action by means of more innovative approaches and additional resources.

59. The implementation of a viable plan of action for the advancement and empowerment of Palestinian women was seriously hampered by the continuation of the oppressive Israeli occupation. Such measures as the confiscation of land, the building and expansion of settlements, the Judaization of occupied East Jerusalem, the fragmentation of Palestinian land, the exploitation of natural resources, the detention of prisoners and denial of the right of return for refugees and displaced Palestinians had long prevented Palestinian women from developing their socio-economic potential and implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Following the provocative visit by the leader of the Likud Party, Mr. Sharon, to the Haram al-Sharif in occupied East Jerusalem on 28 September 2000, violence had claimed over 80 lives and had resulted in the wounding of more than 2000 Palestinians. The international community had seen from photographs in the media that the occupying Power had used excessive force.

60. Despite all hardships, the Palestinian people, and Palestinian women in particular, had laid the foundations for the social, economic and institutional development of the Palestinian State, and had established the necessary educational, health and economic infrastructures, bearing in mind the issue of gender. All Ministries included women's units. Cooperation between those units and non-governmental organizations had produced a national strategy which would serve as the basis for future plans to achieve equality, development, peace and prosperity.

61. Despite the recent events and their disastrous effects on the Middle East peace process, the Palestinian people and its leadership remained committed to achieving a comprehensive and just peace — a peace that would guarantee its inalienable rights, especially the right to self-determination and the creation of an independent State on all Palestinian territory occupied in 1967, the heart of which was Jerusalem, and would allow for the development, integration and advancement of all members of Palestinian society, including women in particular.

62. **Ms. Kislinger** (Venezuela) said that her delegation wished to align itself with the statement that had been made by the Colombian delegation on behalf of the Rio Group. Gender equality and the advancement of women were fundamental aspects of Venezuela's social policy. The country's new Constitution placed men and women on an equal footing with respect to their rights and duties, guaranteed women's right to decide freely how many children they wished to have, protected maternity and paternity rights under all circumstances, guaranteed gender equality in the workplace, and recognized women's work in the home as an economic activity that generated added value and social welfare.

63. In the context of an anti-poverty programme initiated in 1999, a recently established body, the National Institute for Women, had launched a plan to promote women's employment, with the support of a banking corporation. Another initiative was aimed at ensuring that training and development programmes were accessible to women from indigenous and rural

communities. With respect to participation, unfortunately, Venezuelan women, despite their education, still did not play a major role in decision-making, especially in the political arena, and further efforts would be required in that connection.

64. Venezuela was firmly committed to the advancement of women, and had acceded to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It was gratifying that the Convention would shortly enter into force.

65. In the outcome document adopted at the conclusion of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, the international community had reaffirmed its commitment to improving the status of women and upholding their rights, and it was encouraging that that common ultimate aim had prevailed over the participants' diversity of views. Venezuela would continue to work for the implementation of the objectives set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document, with the aim of achieving gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century.

66. **Mr. Hadjiargyrou** (Cyprus) said that his delegation deeply appreciated the efforts of the United Nations to introduce a gender-sensitive perspective in all its fields of work, and welcomed the invaluable work performed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Commission on the Status of Women.

67. The Beijing Platform for Action had called for universal ratification of the historic Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Although that objective had not yet been reached, the steadily rising number of States Parties was an encouraging development. Cyprus, for its part, had withdrawn its single remaining reservation (to Article 9, paragraph 2 of the Convention) on 28 June 2000. His delegation welcomed the successful conclusion of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. It fully supported the important role of non-governmental organizations and specialized institutions such as INSTRAW in defining the problems faced by women and in assisting the work of the United Nations system. It also supported networking at the international, regional and national levels as a means of supporting and stimulating actions by Governments, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, for the purpose of enhancing visibility and empowering women socially, economically and politically.

68. In Cyprus itself, progress had been achieved in all the critical areas of concern set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action. Legal reform had been pursued in all sectors; in particular, a Law on the Trafficking and Exploitation of Women and Children had recently been enacted, and the Citizenship Law had been amended to grant Cypriot women equal rights regarding the citizenship of their children. The Government had made the participation of women in politics another of its priorities, and had taken various measures to that end. Women had been appointed to highly important State posts, and their presence at all levels of the hierarchy within the Civil Service had been increased.

69. The issue of violence against women had been addressed through the development of an appropriate legal framework along with measures aimed at facilitating its enforcement, including the establishment of a monitoring body, the promotion of scientific research, the strengthening of cooperation with non-governmental organizations, the provision of assistance to victims, and the development of a training programme for police officers and all other professionals involved in handling domestic violence cases. In addition, non-governmental organizations, with the support of the Government, were organizing an international conference on violence in the family, to be held in Cyprus from 26 to 30 November 2000.

70. The economic independence of women had been pursued through the development of child care facilities, the promotion of equal pay and the legislative improvement of maternity protection. Cyprus had been working diligently in recent years to harmonize its laws and policies with the standards of the European Union, and some very important legal instruments were currently in preparation, including the Law on Equal Treatment and Equal Opportunities, which would provide for the creation of an enforcement mechanism.

71. With respect to the issue of women and peace, after 26 years of Turkish occupation of part of Cyprus, the women of Cyprus were particularly sensitive to matters of human rights and peace. Throughout those years, the Cypriot women's movement had been active in exploring ways to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Turkish Cypriot women had also played a

valuable role in supporting efforts for reconciliation and the achievement of a federal solution to the Cyprus problem.

72. The progress achieved in Cyprus toward the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was to a great extent attributable to the work of the National Machinery for Women's Rights, which had been granted substantially greater financial and human resources in recent years. It would undoubtedly have an expanded role to play in the future in connection with the inclusion of a gender perspective in all national plans and policies. Cyprus remained strongly committed to pursuing policies and programmes aimed at ensuring that women fully enjoyed their human rights and were equal partners with men in shaping the country's economic, political and social development.

73. **Mr. Ben Mustapha** (Tunisia) said that the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, on the advancement of women, had been a landmark event of the year 2000. It had confirmed the international community's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, and had reaffirmed the objective of women's full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The outcome document adopted at the conclusion of the special session constituted a solid basis for future action aimed at promoting women's rights more effectively. He expressed appreciation for the work of the preparatory committee for the special session and the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, of which Tunisia had become a member.

74. It was disconcerting to find that, in a context of globalization, and despite the efforts of the international community, the advancement of women was still proceeding unevenly. The situation of women was still more precarious in regions affected by poverty, armed conflict, illiteracy and marginalization. The international community should assume its responsibilities by addressing the problem of poverty in view of the gender-specific impact of that phenomenon. Tunisia, for its part, had undertaken a number of anti-poverty initiatives.

75. In Tunisian policy, respect for human rights, solidarity and democracy were fundamental values, and promotion of the rights of women and the family had consistently been a prominent theme. Tunisia was well aware that there could be no meaningful, sustainable development without effective promotion of the rights of women, whose role in society made them a powerful catalyst in development. Consequently, women's rights were deemed to be an integral part of fundamental human rights. A Ministry had been established expressly to deal with matters of relevance to women and the family, and an array of measures had been taken to combat gender-based discrimination and remove obstacles to the integration of women into the development process. Tunisia's determination to promote women's rights and eliminate all forms of discrimination against them had been demonstrated, in the area of legislation in particular, by the introduction of a number of Constitutional amendments and the reform of four major Tunisian law codes, namely the Personal Status Code, the Nationality Code, the Labour Code and the Criminal Code. The reforms had been rooted in the distinctive nature of Tunisian culture, and had been guided by the twin imperatives of preserving the country's Arab and Muslim identity while simultaneously embracing the universal values that were the foundation-stone of the modern world.

76. The same constant concern to promote gender equality was evident in other sectors as well. In the field of education, specific measures had been adopted with a view to keeping girls in the school system. With respect to the political field, at the last municipal elections, 20 per cent of all seats had been reserved for women candidates. Moreover, specific measures had been taken to strengthen the economic position of women, and the forty-eighth World Congress of the World Association of Women Entrepreneurs had been held in Tunisia from 2 to 4 October 2000. In the field of health, concern for equality had been given tangible expression in the expedited development of basic infrastructures and the integration of reproductive health into basic health care. Lastly, awareness campaigns had been organized with a view to combating violence against women.

77. **Mr. Šerkšnys** (Lithuania) said that one of the priority guidelines of Lithuania's policy was to ensure equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for men and women in all spheres of life. The success of State policy aiming to implement democracy, achieve social and economic progress and promote human rights was directly related to the level of participation by both men and women in those processes.

78. The legal basis for the implementation of gender equality had been established by the adoption of basic laws on social security and labour, in particular the

Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of December 1998, for which a monitoring body had been created. Institutional machinery for the principle of equal opportunities was operational at the parliamentary and governmental levels and in civil society. Parliament had a standing committee on family and children issues, while matters of relevance to women in particular were addressed by the Group of Women Parliamentarians. Several years previously, moreover, a State Consultant had been entrusted with responsibility for gender and family questions. The main agency for the development, implementation and coordination of policy in the area of gender equality was the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

79. In 1996, in accordance with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Government had approved a series of action plans for the implementation of the Platform. In response to the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, it had started to prepare a new national programme for equal opportunities for women and men.

80. Lithuania had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1995, and in June 2000 its first and second periodic reports had been submitted to CEDAW, together with an alternative report prepared by Lithuanian women's non-governmental organizations. The comments and recommendations of the Committee's experts had been discussed article by article by the Interministerial Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and subsequently the Government had decided to prepare a new national programme for equal opportunities for both sexes. As CEDAW had requested, a Lithuanian translation of its comments and recommendations had been disseminated as widely as possible.

81. Not only was Lithuania prepared to pursue the implementation of the Convention, it was also in favour of the expansion and strengthening of CEDAW's functions, with a view to the more effective promotion of women's rights.

82. The Government was well aware of the need to work in close partnership with non-governmental organizations in order to be able to implement a constructive policy. At the Third National Women's Congress, which would be held in Vilnius on 9 December 2000, approximately 1000 delegates from all regions of the country would discuss ways of enhancing participation by women in the process of the political, economic and social development of democratic society in Lithuania. In addition, the country would shortly host a conference that was being organized as a follow-up to the 1999 Reykjavik Conference: in June 2001, some 600 participants from 12 countries would meet in Vilnius to discuss and evaluate the implementation of resolutions adopted at Reykjavik, and to consider future actions aimed at promoting gender democracy.

83. Lithuania was successfully solving gender problems in the fields of education, labour, health and the media, although there was still much work to be done. Appropriate measures would have to be taken to combat trafficking in women, reduce poverty among ageing women and increase the number of women in decision-making structures.

84. **Mr. Leal Cordeiro** (Angola) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statements made by the Group of 77 and China and the States Members of the Southern African Development Community in connection with the agenda item under discussion. The year just past had been marked by a number of significant events, including the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women. Angola expected to ratify the Protocol before its entry into force in December 2000.

85. Despite its success as a review of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had demonstrated that national and regional characteristics arising from diverse historical, cultural and religious contexts, combined with a lack of funds, continued to be a major obstacle to the strengthening and international coordination of institutional mechanisms for improving the status of women.

86. In spite of a law instituting equality between women and men, there had been no significant improvement in that area in Angola, in part because of the war which had been going on there for 40 years. Happily, it was approaching its end at last. The war situation had confronted Angolan women with very hard challenges, as they had had to assume most family responsibilities and care for children and the elderly. Largely for that reason, the illiteracy rate among them

was 75 per cent, compared to 25 per cent for Angolan men.

87. The Government was seriously committed to improving the situation, and to that end had developed, through its Ministry for Family and the Advancement of Women, a number of projects and programmes within the framework of the national strategy for the advancement of women in the year 2000. The list included a project for the creation of community development centres, a project for the training of rural development agents, a programme for the support of rural women's associations and a national microcredit programme. Those and other initiatives had helped Angolan women to rethink the relationship between the sexes on the basis of the concept of equality in development. His delegation wished to take the opportunity to thank the agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and a number of countries for their invaluable assistance in implementing the programmes in question.

88. Angola remained firmly committed to a gender perspective and action on gender issues. Governments should include the gender aspect in their policies, and should create institutional channels through which that aspect could be addressed, in order to further improve the condition of women. While the international community appeared to be on the right course toward that objective, perhaps the time had come to think about new strategies aimed at eliminating inequality between men and women throughout the world.

89. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) said that following the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, Rwanda had adopted a national gender policy which was nearing completion. Once in place, it would provide overall orientation on gender mainstreaming and the advancement of women, with a view to facilitating the attainment of gender equality and the empowerment of Rwandan women. Immediately after the special session, at a meeting at which all partners concerned with the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had been briefed about the outcome of the session, a steering committee to coordinate and monitor the work of implementation had been established. The steering committee would also serve as a pressure group to ensure that the Government, bilateral and multilateral organizations and civil society fulfilled the commitments they had made at the Fourth World Conference on Women and at the special session in June 2000.

90. The Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, in collaboration with civil society and the National Assembly, was working actively to disseminate information about the recently enacted Law on Inheritance and Succession, and was encouraging spouses to marry officially before the municipal authorities in order to benefit from that law. In addition, information campaigns were being conducted to raise awareness of national legislation and international human-rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Training and sensitization activities were proceeding at all levels to ensure that gender was an integral aspect of all development priorities.

91. Rwanda was undergoing a democratization and decentralization process that would enable Rwandan men and women, for the first time in the country's history, to elect municipal councillors and leaders. That unprecedented event would enhance the culture of transparency and accountability in the whole system of governance. Policies and programmes would no longer be imposed by the Government; rather, they would result from bottom-up planning by the people themselves on the basis of their priorities. An affirmative-action measure stipulating that 30 per cent of the members of municipal councils must be women had been adopted to guarantee that women would be able to participate in decision-making. The Ministry of Gender and Women in Development, in collaboration with women's organizations, was encouraging women to participate in the electoral process.

92. A constitutional review commission had been established, and three of its 15 members were women. It was expected that their presence would ensure that the concerns of Rwandan women were taken into account in the review process. Moreover, elected representatives of national women's councils would sit in the National Assembly to ensure that women's views and concerns were considered there.

93. The Ministry of Gender and Women in Development was continuing its efforts to combat poverty among women by strengthening its microcredit programmes. Approximately three quarters of the municipal funds concerned had received a total of over 300 000 United States dollars — a clear indication that the Government was committed to the socio-economic empowerment of Rwandan women and the improvement of their status.

94. His delegation would like to participate in an open debate on women, peace and security that was scheduled to be held in the Security Council on 24 October 2000. During the 1994 genocide, rape had been used as a means of torture; many Rwandan women were still traumatized and had contracted HIV/AIDS as a result. The international community should do everything in its power to help them and to make sure that the perpetrators were held accountable for their crimes.

95. **Ms. Elisha** (Benin) said that the Government of Benin had established the institutional machinery required for the implementation of the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, and had developed a national policy for the advancement of women. That policy was aimed at enhancing women's living conditions through social, cultural, legal and economic empowerment. It focused primarily on the promotion of women's education and training, economic independence and health, the adoption and enforcement of a more favourable legal status for women, recognition of the value of women's work, the promotion of cultures and traditions tending to foster women's self-realization, and the management of social and environmental disasters and other major phenomena.

96. Many Beninese women were gainfully employed. In the primary sector, 41.6 per cent of the labour force consisted of women (and 32 per cent of all farm assets belonged to women), while the corresponding figures for manufacturing and trade were 7 per cent and 44.8 per cent respectively. Women accounted for much of the country's gross domestic product. They held 4.3 per cent of all service jobs, and 1.7 per cent of other tertiary-sector jobs. It was thus clear that Beninese women deserved greater attention from the country's partners in development, and should receive more assistance from them.

97. Despite their participation in social and economic activities, the lives of Beninese women continued to be dominated by sociocultural values such as polygamy, levirate, early marriage, dietary taboos and prohibitions, seclusion and genital mutilation. Education was a major challenge: 80.3 per cent of Beninese women could neither read nor write, and illiteracy rates were especially high in rural areas. Girls' education had always been neglected, owing to the inferior status of women in traditional society, and consequently school enrolment rates for girls had progressed only very slowly; the gross rate had been 59.71 per cent in 1998, but girls frequently dropped out of school for a variety of socio-economic reasons. A sustained effort extending over the primary, secondary and university levels would be required before critical mass could be achieved.

98. The Government was well aware of the situation, and was working tirelessly for the advancement and empowerment of women.

99. **Ms. Brobbey** (Ghana) said that the presence of a significant number of leaders at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had attested the importance of gender equality and the advancement of women in the view of the international community. While those objectives had by no means been achieved as yet, her delegation lauded the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and noted with satisfaction that it would shortly enter into force. It was to be hoped that the Division for the Advancement of Women would be strengthened to enable it to offer CEDAW the required support in that connection. Her delegation noted with disappointment that the goal of universal ratification of the Convention by the year 2000 had not been achieved, and urged those countries that had not yet ratified or acceded to it to do so. Meanwhile, States Parties whose reports were overdue should avail themselves, if necessary, of the technical support of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

100. Her delegation endorsed the call in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session for the adoption or strengthening of measures to combat trafficking in women. In that connection, it welcomed the support provided by international cooperation and technical assistance programmes, and looked forward to the successful conclusion of the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and, in particular, its elaboration of a protocol.

101. Her delegation regretted that the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was likely to be unable to continue implementing its mandate for want of the necessary resources. The closure of the Institute would be a setback to the cause of the advancement of women. Despite its financial difficulties, INSTRAW had developed a Gender Awareness Information and

Networking System, and it was essential for the international community to provide the Institute with the financial support needed to enable it to carry on with its work.

102. Ghana had made progress toward gender equality: traditional practices that were injurious to women's health and violated their human rights had been banned, a customary and divorce law had been enacted to provide one standard form of inheritance and correct injustices suffered by women and children under customary laws, and the law on the distribution of property acquired upon divorce had been amended to allow for a more equitable distribution in favour of women. Despite those achievements, however, it had not been feasible to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in their entirety. Accordingly, her delegation endorsed the recommendations aimed at furthering full implementation that were contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/341).

103. It was essential to muster the political will required to implement the Political Declaration and the outcome document adopted by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session, in order to achieve the goal of gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century.

104. **Ms. Rajaonarivelo** (Madagascar) said that the twenty-third special session of the General General Assembly, devoted as it had been to the five-year review of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, had been highly satisfactory and had resulted in progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The next step would be for Governments to give effect to the commitments they had made during the special session. In that connection, the Parliament of Madagascar was considering amendments to existing legislation with a view to eliminating any statutory provisions that were discriminatory toward women. At the Millennium Summit, the President of the Republic had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby demonstrating the Government's determination to promote women's human rights. Indeed, the President had reaffirmed that gender equality and respect for the rights of children were prerequisites for sustainable development. Consequently, it was of the utmost importance that all countries should ratify the Convention, and the entry into force of the Optional Protocol on 22 December 2000 would be a significant event.

105. It was regrettable that the negative effects of globalization tended to fall disproportionately on women, but poverty and underdevelopment must not be made an excuse for failing to promote women's rights. On the contrary, recognition of women's human rights would facilitate the effort to eradicate poverty and overcome obstacles to sustainable development. Women accounted for over half the population of Madagascar, and they must be provided with the economic and political means of participating in the country's development. Her delegation therefore supported the Secretary-General's proposals for allocating additional resources to the Division for the Advancement of Women, strengthening the Inter-agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, and providing INSTRAW and UNIFEM with adequate resources to enable them to carry out their mandates.

106. In Madagascar, preparations were under way to establish units to address gender issues in various ministerial agencies and institutions, with the goals of setting operational priorities, achieving concerted action in combating gender inequalities, coordinating the several programmes of the national development plan, and giving priority to the issue of rural women, inasmuch as in Madagascar, poverty was an essentially rural phenomenon.

107. It was undoubtedly encouraging that progress had been made in the effort to eradicate trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, domestic violence and crimes of honour. At the same time, however, there was no denying that globalization had aggravated the situation. Accordingly, her delegation urged the international community to mobilize resources through international and regional cooperation and to strengthen technical cooperation aimed at helping developing countries make effective use of reliable data and indicators, and facilitating women's access to education and occupational training. In addition, men and women should be taught how to achieve a more harmonious balance between work and family life.

108. **Ms. Enkhtsetseg** (Mongolia) said that the high-level participation by Member States in the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and the reaffirmation of their strong commitment to the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action had

demonstrated the political will to promote gender equality.

109. Despite many achievements in improving the lot of women, there was still a long way to go. Inequalities still persisted, and women bore a disproportionate burden of poverty, violence, illiteracy, malnutrition and ill health. They were also the primary victims of armed conflict, HIV/AIDS and outrageous transnational crimes such as trafficking in persons. Her delegation wished to associate itself with those that had spoken in favour of better coordinated action to advance the empowerment of women, in accordance with the Platform for Action and the outcome document.

110. It was gratifying to note that since the Fourth World Conference on Women, 17 States had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, bringing the total number of States Parties to 166. States that had not yet ratified or acceded to the Convention should do so as soon as possible so as to achieve its universal observance. Mongolia had been among the first to join the Convention and was cooperating actively with CEDAW; its fourth periodic report would be considered at the Committee's twenty-fourth session. Mongolia had also signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention, and its ratification procedure was under way in the Parliament.

111. To enable women to become equal collaborators in, and beneficiaries of, development would require the forging of genuine partnerships between men and women, between the public sector, civil society and the private sector, and between affluent and poor nations. Mongolia was working to build such partnerships and promote responsible cooperation. New legislation had been enacted and some older laws revised to mainstream gender into policies and programmes. The new labour code contained provisions prohibiting discrimination in the workplace. Women's equal rights in inheritance, land use, ownership of livestock and other property were provided for in civil and family laws. After the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Government had adopted a national plan of action for the advancement of women, which was being applied in tandem with an unemployment reduction programme and a national poverty alleviation programme. The national plan of action for the advancement of women aimed at creating equal opportunities for women and covered a number of interrelated areas such as economic activities, poverty, health, education, rural women, the family, women and decision-making, violence against women, human rights, the environment, national machinery and the media.

112. Poverty reduction remained a priority, and a women's development fund had been established under the national poverty alleviation programme. The fund focused on income generation, especially for female-headed households, the improvement of rural health services, and non-governmental organizations. Projects for female-headed households included pre-school strengthening components so that single mothers could engage in wage-earning activities. In Mongolia, there were more than 40 women's non-governmental organizations that were actively involved in the implementation of the national poverty alleviation programme, especially through the organization of skills development activities.

113. The share of the private sector in Mongolia's economy had risen from approximately six per cent ten years previously to over 70 per cent. Women made up half the national workforce, and many of them were currently employed in the private sector. According to the national employers' federation, women owned more than a quarter of all private enterprises in the country. The positive impact of those activities should be gauged not only in terms of better living standards for women engaged in business, but also, and even more importantly, in terms of a renewed sense of self-reliance associated with the expansion of individual initiative. Accordingly, it was essential to devote further efforts to the development of the country's human resources, including its women, notably through vocational training, so that many more could benefit from the opportunities offered by a market economy.

114. The challenges faced by Mongolian women included complex problems in the areas of poverty, unemployment, health, education, social protection, culture and behaviour. As workers, women had less job security; as entrepreneurs, they had less access to information and credit. They were also more likely to be poor if they were heads of households. Social dislocation, in some cases, generated frustration which, at times, translated into crime and violence. Alcohol abuse had become a major cause of family breakdown, domestic violence, prostitution and suicide among teenagers. It was important to learn from the experiences of other countries and best practices in dealing with those issues.

115. In Mongolia, 45.1 per cent of the female population led nomadic or semi-nomadic lives. Rural women were of critical importance in agricultural production and in the rural economy, as was the case in most developing countries. The transition to a market economy had brought both opportunities and challenges to the rural population, including women. The privatization of approximately 30 million head of livestock had turned herders into owners, and had thus contributed to an improvement in their condition. At the same time, however, women and girls in rural areas lacked basic social services, such as primary health care and quality education; furthermore, they were deprived of access to information technology, owing to poor infrastructure. It had been at Mongolia's initiative that the General Assembly had adopted a resolution on rural women at its fifty-fourth session. The Government of Mongolia, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women, was currently making preparations for an expert group meeting on rural women, to be held in May 2001 in Ulaanbaatar.

116. In addition, a partnership was being forged between the Government and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) following the signature, in 1999, of a Memorandum of Understanding to empower the women of Mongolia economically and politically into the twenty-first century. A country programme would be developed jointly with UNIFEM on the basis of the findings of a study that had been conducted in the course of the current year.

117. Lastly, her delegation hoped that the draft resolution concerning the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women would command the broadest possible support.

118. **Ms. Jarbussynova** (Kazakhstan) said that the Fourth World Conference on Women and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly had played a very important role in the development of the movement to recognize women's rights. In adopting the outcome document of the special session, States had committed themselves to further action to ensure the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Her delegation fully supported the activity of the United Nations system and the development of complementary programmes to that end.

119. The Economic and Social Council played an essential role in promoting gender mainstreaming and overseeing system-wide coordination. As the Secretary-General had stated in his report, the experience of the previous five years had shown that the Council's high-level coordination, humanitarian and operational activities provided opportunities to further policy coordination and inter-agency cooperation towards the achievement of the objectives of the Platform for Action and the outcome document.

120. Her delegation acknowledged the essential role played by the Commission on the Status of Women, which would continue to assist the Economic and Social Council in the follow-up to the implementation of the Platform for Action. In view of the importance given to gender equality issues in conference review processes, the Commission should devote particular attention to increased synergy with the other functional commissions. Her delegation welcomed the possible strengthening of the Commission's mandate to enable it to continue to monitor the implementation of the Platform for Action and the outcome document.

121. At the Millennium Summit, the President of Kazakhstan had signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, thereby reaffirming the country's regard for the observance of women's fundamental human rights. The advancement of women was one of the primary concerns of national policy. Legislation was being examined with a view to achieving gender balance. In accordance with the country's long-term strategy, mechanisms were being developed to increase women's integration into social and political life and to expand their representation in leadership posts. The Government, with the participation of non-governmental organizations, had prepared a national action plan for implementation of the Platform for Action in various spheres. Enterprises were being offered significant incentives to employ women. In the sphere of health, all possible measures had been taken to improve the situation, especially in regions that had suffered ecological catastrophes, such as the former nuclear test site of Semipalatinsk and the Aral Sea region.

122. In conclusion, she reiterated her delegation's unqualified support for the United Nations efforts to improve the status of women and to attain real gender equality throughout the world.

123. **Ms. Olszowska** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the promotion of gender equality was one of her organization's key objectives. Its Executive Board was currently considering the preliminary proposals of the Director-General concerning a draft Medium-Term Strategy for the years 2002-2007, and one aspect of that Strategy was to be the incorporation of a gender perspective into all UNESCO's programmes and activities.

124. The question of education was of great concern to Member States. At the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had launched an Initiative on Girls' Education under UNESCO's direction, with the participation of other United Nations organizations and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Consultations at the highest level had taken place between UNESCO and UNICEF, and the several partners were currently reviewing plans that had been developed to support the United Nations programme in that area. Activities under the Initiative would be carried out at country, subregional and regional levels by UNESCO's field offices, with the support of various other sectors of the Organization.

125. A number of advocacy-related activities were in prospect, including a panel on gender equality in basic education at the forthcoming meeting of Ministers of Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. That meeting was expected to produce a document which would serve as a basis for the development of national action plans designed to achieve the goals that had been endorsed at Dakar. Within the time frame August - November 2000, activities aimed at the sensitization of senior policy makers and Government officials on gender issues had also been undertaken.

126. In conjunction with the prospective Meeting of Heads of State of French-Speaking African Countries, UNESCO was organizing a parallel meeting with representatives of Governments and non-governmental organizations on the subject of linking formal and non-formal education for girls. Great importance was being attached to promoting all forms of education, especially non-formal education, which tended to be better adapted to the needs of girls and women. The meeting was expected to contribute to raising awareness among senior Government officials on gender disparities in education, and inducing them to make recommendations to their respective Governments for the adoption of policies designed to eliminate such disparities.

127. UNESCO's strategic framework document on basic education for gender equality and five regional state-of-the-art reports on education for girls and women would be presented by a panel organized expressly for the purpose at the International Conference on Education in 2001. UNESCO was currently preparing a strategy encompassing all sectors of education, which would supplement its concept paper relating to the Initiative on Girls' Education. The various activities aimed at supporting that Initiative were expected to facilitate the establishment of a unified education system that would accommodate diversity and ensure equivalence between formal and non-formal education, thereby allowing mobility of learners between them, and to further the development of partnerships to help change external factors that had a negative impact on girls' education.

Organization of work

128. **The Chairperson** said that draft resolutions A/C.3/55/L.7* (agenda item 105) and A/C.3/55/L.10 (agenda item 106) would be submitted at the seventeenth meeting, before the conclusion of the discussion of agenda items 107 and 108. The committee would take action on draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.2, entitled "International Year of Volunteers", submitted under agenda item 103, and draft resolution A/C.3/55/L.6, entitled "Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing", submitted under agenda item 104.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.